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The Middle East
An Indefinable Region

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The Middle East—An Indefinable Region

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In the current sequence of rapidly paced international events the Middle East stands out as one of the most critical of all areas. It looms on the political horizon as the focal point of an ideological world of its own between conflicting ideologies of the free and Communist worlds. In print, always capitalized, the name appears repeatedly in metropolitan dailies and in the more serious periodicals lining our newsstands. On the air the two words "Middle East" have a familiar ring, figuring prominently in broadcasts and telecasts that range from news flash to documentary roundup. Not a few books utilize "Middle East" as all or a part of the title. Since 1947 the *Middle East Journal* has regularly chronicled problems and happenings of the area. Yet no standard boundary delimitation exists by which a Middle East region can be precisely located geographically. Rather, not only is its position shadowy around the edges, but entire countries or groups of countries are included or excluded with surprising facility. The term carries different meanings to its various users, or it may refer to a part of the world in much the same manner that one points a finger at a map. For example, whenever serious trouble erupts between Israel and one or more of the Arab states, flaming headlines proclaim a crisis in the Middle East.

Most writers on the subject define the Middle East by listing in inventory style those political entities making up their concept of the region. Before considering individual areal units in

such lists and before attempting to analyze their various geographic, political, historic, economic, and cultural implications, it becomes necessary to look into some of the basic premises of applied regional identification. It is equally essential to recognize the trends which have taken place in the use of regional place names. Concepts of any geographic region do not remain permanently fixed but vary from place to place and from time to time. Regions are subject to the same human capriciousness as the people who write and talk so glibly about them. Too, geographical boundaries as laid down academically in any part of the habitable globe are inevitably distorted to accommodate political, economic, and cultural administrative needs.

Regional terms conveniently denote geographical areas which may be either smaller or larger than the national political unit. Nomenclature of regions within the confines of a single country seldom causes concern. Here the geographic factors responsible for their existence normally depend upon a physical and/or cultural homogeneity with which the inhabitants are familiar and which they accept. For example, Americans speak freely of New England, the Midwest, and the West Coast without being challenged. The French have their Provence, the British their Midlands, and in India one well-known southern section is known as the Malabar Coast.

Such regions may or may not be bounded by sharp lines, but in any event no great confusion



results from the use of these regional names. As an example, Caribbean America is an accepted regional term, but some geographers would include the South American states of Venezuela and Colombia while some would not. In greater detail, why are the Bahamas often considered as Caribbean islands when they are not located in that sea? Again, the division of Europe into western and eastern regions adheres

to no set pattern and becomes hopelessly complex when the continent is partitioned into west, central, and eastern segments.

A Near, a Middle, and a Far East

The concept of a Middle East evolved from "Near East" and "Far East," which in turn came about from the single idea of "east" as opposed to "west." Actually, the East was named from



the West, never having enjoyed the advantage of a name that sprang from the region itself. Long ago, before the time of Marco Polo (1254-1324), Europeans considered as East all lands beyond the eastern portals of their own known world. Since the 13th century the Italians referred to this vague area as the "Levant," a term later adopted in other Western European languages. The Gates of Belgrade, the eastern ap-

proaches to Vienna, Constantinople of the Byzantine Empire, and the Isthmus of Suez were only a few of the ever-changing points of contact between two contrasting worlds.

Gradually the term "Levant" gave way to that of "Near East" in English as the need increased to define more clearly the general area of the great extent of Asia. Not without logic, those parts of the East closest to home base were

termed as the Near East; those parts farthest away, as the Far East. However, a Near East adjacent to the European realm and a Far East associated with the distant Orient left a vast expanse of territory between them. Thus, reference to a "Middle East" could easily have applied to the periphery of much of the great Asia landmass. The British could have used the term for identifying their sphere of influence along the northern shores of the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal as India was drawn into the Empire.

Oddly enough one encounters very little documentation on a region specifically called the Middle East until the early part of the 20th century, and it was only shortly before and during World War I that it came into prominence. The British originally sponsored the term to designate the area of their interests in the general vicinity of the Persian Gulf, especially occasioned by their involvement in territory on the route to India. Evidently no attempt was made to displace the term "Near East," which at that time carried westward into southeastern Europe more than it does at present.

As late as the eve of World War II this triple concept of a Near, Middle, and Far East held without serious overlap or conflict. Americans commonly associated the Near East with those areas which had formerly made up the Ottoman Empire, extending westward into the Balkans as had the influence of the Turks. Certainly any identification of a Middle East by Americans in prewar days—though the term and its British connotation had gained recognition—was never accepted for general usage. The terms "Levant" and "Asia Minor" supplemented Near East in referring to lands now encompassed in most prevailing versions of the Middle East.

Early in World War II the British established military headquarters in Egypt for carrying out their operations from Greece and the Mediterranean coasts of Africa and Asia eastward through Iraq. Included were the army, navy, and air force components of the Middle East Command, as well as the Middle

East Supply Center.¹ The exigencies of war, especially the loss or acquisition of territory, obviously brought about shifts in the area over which British forces could or needed to operate. India and Burma, with their own commands, were not included in the British wartime designation of its Middle East military organizations.

American forces, working closely with the British in the Middle East military area, quite naturally made use of the same terminology. As a place name, it was dispersed to all parts of the world in press releases giving reports on the progress of the war. In the postwar period the strong concept of a Middle East continued in the United States as well as in Britain. Unfortunately it did not completely obliterate a lagging notion of the traditional prewar Near East. Neither did it eradicate the fancy of even a more vague Middle East as filling the gap between a Near East and a Far East.² The Middle East of 1964, then, conforms roughly to one of three, each one of which in turn is contingent upon its own series of indefinite criteria. The last of the three steadily approaches obsolescence:

1. As more or less synonymous with the Near East earlier used in the United States.
2. As developed in British military circles, roughly corresponding to a traditional Near

¹ The Middle East Supply Center in its later official publications listed 27 specific political entities falling within its area of responsibilities: Cyrenaica, Malta, Tripolitania, Cyprus, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Transjordan, Aden Colony, Aden Protectorate, Iraq, Persia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Muscat, Oman, Qatar, Trucial Oman, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, British Somaliland, Eritrea, Ethiopia, ex-Italian Somaliland, French Somaliland, and the Sudan.

² As late as 1952 the National Geographic Society issued a press release including a map identifying the Near East as comprising Turkey, Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, and the countries of the Arabian Peninsula; the Middle East as India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, and Ceylon; and the Far East as China, Mongolian Republic, Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Indochina, Thailand (Siam), Burma, Malaya, and Indonesia. Acceptance of this version of the "Easts" has proved to be extremely limited.



East, minus any of the Balkan countries, but plus an extension eastward to lands associated with the Persian Gulf and its hinterland (probably the most widely accepted).

3. As territory between the Near East and Far East, adhering to a geographical position best described as South Asia.

The area around and beyond the eastern Mediterranean has rapidly come to the fore since the war as one in which the United States has vital interests. There is much need to write and talk of its problems and to understand its people. Geographic relationships between areas and activities taking place on them need to be studied in order to eliminate the confusion enshrouding overlapping terminology and vague regional boundaries.

Various Concepts of Middle East

Any given allocation of geographic area to define the Middle East may be accomplished in various ways. The most convenient method consists of straight enumeration of the political units making up the region: United Arab Republic, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel, Saudi Arabia, et cetera. A somewhat similar but less exacting method depends upon blocking off well-known or easily recognized areas in order to build up an overall region: Arabian Peninsula, Eastern Mediterranean countries (or Levant), North-east Africa, Asia Minor, et cetera.

In a method somewhat more intriguing to the geographer, the limits may be identified by directional reference to physical features of the earth's surface. Thus the Middle East could

conceivably be described as lying south of the Caucasus, west of the Khyber Pass, east of the Straits—Bosporus and Dardanelles—and the Libyan Desert, and north of the confluence of the Blue with the White Nile. Admittedly, such a method of regional description is far from specific, but it does offer the possibility of setting limits other than those of international boundaries. For example, the northern Sudan has more of the characteristics which would be typical of a Middle Eastern country than does the southern Sudan and could thus be incorporated separately by this flexible manner of delineation.

In its regional organization of bureaus the Department of State employs the term "Near East"³ rather than "Middle East." However the term has long been employed by the Department in matters of protocol⁴ and in coping with activities involving the area itself. Apart from the designation of areas of regional administration there is frequent occasion to recognize a Middle East as pertinent to international relations. In so doing, the following political units are taken into account: United Arab Republic, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia and all other areas on the Arabian Peninsula, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, West Pakistan, Turkey, Greece, and Cyprus. Upon occasion Libya has also been included because of its close relationship to the Arab states to the east. Before national consciousness became so deeply ingrained in the African states, both Ethiopia and

Sudan also figured at times as being closely associated with Middle Eastern affairs.

At its maximum the Middle East is said to extend from Morocco on the Atlantic to East Pakistan on the Bay of Bengal. Northward, it rarely, if ever, is mentioned as penetrating the territory of the Soviet Union. Southward, except in Africa, a series of water bodies provide a sharp geographic limit—the Indian Ocean and its embayments. With the exception of a small segment of Turkey the European Continent does not figure prominently in any assembly of definitions outlining the Middle East. Nevertheless, Greece may in some cases be included by virtue of its lingering role as a unit of the Near East.⁵ Including questionable areas, as illustrated in the map on pages 2-3, the Middle East covers a distance of 6,250 miles from east to west and 2,900 miles from north to south—impressive dimensions indeed!

Conversely, it is also possible to recognize a Middle East of a much more restricted perimeter, comprising political units which few would omit in defining the region. This map also illustrates this minimum version of a Middle East.

The large expanses of territory included in a maximum but omitted from a minimum Middle East, then, make up the area of controversy in formulating a regional definition. North Africa, much of northeastern Africa, South Asia, and a small section of southeastern Europe all pose problems by having some, but not all, of the characteristics which might fit them into a nicely packaged Middle East. These characteristics are difficult to isolate, for they necessarily merge one into the other in accounting for a cultural pattern existing on a given landscape. On the one hand they give to any region a distinct imprint, and on the other they mark it as being different from all other regions.

³The Balkan Peninsula was once commonly considered as a part of the Near East because of its association with the Ottoman Empire. But since World War I the Balkan countries have come to be more integrated in European affairs and hence ties with areas to the southeast have become severed. Nevertheless, past associations die slowly so that the southern part of the peninsula may yet be linked to the Middle East by those considering this region as being coextensive with the Near East.

⁴The Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (NEA) includes two offices associated with the Near East part of its name: Office of Greek, Turkish and Iranian Affairs (GTI) and Office of Near Eastern Affairs (NE). From an interpretation of this regional organizational structure it can be concluded that the term "Near East" in this case encompasses the following political units: Greece, Turkey, Crete, Cyprus, United Arab Republic, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Trucial Oman, Muscat and Oman, Aden and the Protectorate of South Arabia, Iraq, and Iran. This area as a whole is not unlike most modern-day versions of the Middle East.

⁵Alfred L. M. Gottschalk, who was in the consular service from 1902 to 1918, on January 19, 1911, wrote to each consul in the Turkish Empire and signed himself "Consul General at Large for the Middle East and Africa." (File 127.31/1)

Seven factors may be selected as leading criteria in evaluating various concepts of an area which might qualify as being "Middle Eastern." Of these, two are physical in nature (tricontinental location, physical landscape), two are both physical and economic (transit zone, petroleum resources), and three are cultural (the Arab area, religion, language). A brief analysis of each factor, while not purporting to draw clean-cut lines of delineation, may possibly throw some light on the basic structure of a Middle East as it is currently fitted into the world pattern of politicogeographic blocs.

Tricontinental Location

The Middle East is focused on a tricontinental node reflecting the coastal configurations of Africa, Europe, and Asia where they most nearly converge.⁶ Not only the Mediterranean Sea but the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, and tributary water bodies provide easy ingress deep into a landmass of gigantic proportions. Even the Black Sea, approachable by water route only through the Straits, adds to the nautical pattern of the area.

Significantly, the juxtaposition of penetrating water areas separated by land bridges creates a geographical situation not found in like degree elsewhere in the world. The Suez Canal extends for only 104 miles in connecting the Mediterranean with the Red Sea; Asia Minor separates the Mediterranean from the Black Sea by 280 miles; and the Arabian Peninsula is pinched at its narrowest point by a land distance of 630 miles. As a result strategic sea routes and restricted land passages make it difficult to dissociate this land-water ratio from any concept of the Middle East.

The heart of the Middle East, as generally accepted (see map on page 5), centers upon two land bridges: (1) that traversed by the Suez Canal and (2) that joining the Arabian

Peninsula to the rest of the Asia mainland. Most news on the Middle East relates to events that transpire in the vicinity of these two isthmus-like features, seldom more than a few hundred miles from the periphery of the Mediterranean and Red Seas and the Persian Gulf. Cairo, Beirut, Abadan, Baghdad, Tel Aviv, and Damascus all qualify as potential if not actual news centers. They lie squarely in the tricontinental nodal area. Tehran to the northeast, Istanbul to the northwest, and even the Yemen, Aden and the Protectorate of South Arabia, and Muscat and Oman, relatively far to the southeast in the outermost reaches of the Arabian Peninsula, still may fall into the category. But as one recedes from the critical core of the Middle East, so wanes direct association with it. Points far removed from the influence of the core and its centripetal forces, as Casablanca, Madras, and Addis Ababa, may conceivably face the same problems as do Suez and Basra, but they also lie in or adjacent to other regions with strong characteristics alien to those of the Middle East.

Physical Landscape

The landscape most typical of the Middle East is inhospitable to human endeavor. Great expanses of desert, barren plateau, and rugged terrain at best support limited numbers of nomads and tribesmen who must ever be on the move to find a livelihood. No more than 5 percent of the area can presently be cultivated in the average Middle Eastern country. In contrast a few favored areas provide sustenance for moderate or even dense settlement. The latter are normally occasioned by the presence of sufficient water to permit intensive agricultural production, as the result of either plentiful rainfall or a source of irrigation water.

A classic example of crowding is that of the some 27 million people dependent upon the rich lands bordering the Nile in the United Arab Republic, still called Egypt by many. The Tigris and the Euphrates valleys in Iraq, the coastal strip of the eastern Mediterranean, especially in Israel and Lebanon, and the lowlands of western Turkey are likewise productive on a large scale. Settlements ranging from great cities to villages

⁶ Some scholars recognize Europe and Asia as the single continent of Eurasia; some even consider Europe, Asia, and Africa to be one huge continent. Such points of view do not invalidate the basic premise of a tricontinental location since the configuration of the landmass involved is the same whether the Old World is identified as one, two, or three individual continents.

take advantage of every river valley or desert spring to accentuate further the concentration of population. In total the Middle East counts its people by the tens of millions.

Spottiness of development extends not only throughout but far beyond the central core of the Middle East. The same characteristics of desert wastes flecked with islands of fertility continue westward along the entire southern shore of the Mediterranean and southward into the Sahara Desert. Eastward it continues as far as the monsoon lands of southern Asia. Northwestward toward Europe the nature of the landscape changes markedly at the Straits to that of a humid, temperate land so that no part of the Balkan Peninsula can be classified as Middle Eastern on the basis of physical traits alone. Southward along the eastern margin of Africa the transition from a desert landscape to the settlement pattern of the East African highlands defies any physical delimitation.

In short, relief and climate and the harsh human regime they impose may characterize the Middle East, but they fail to determine any regional limits other than those of broad transition.

Transit Zone

For ages men have been traversing the Middle East in transit between lands of Western and Eastern cultures. Because of the strategic geographical position of the Middle East in relation to the landmasses of Europe, Asia, and, to a lesser extent, Africa, transportation routes have since earliest times been channeled over the restricted land and water areas making up the region. Asia Minor served as a land bridge into Central Asia and toward the little-known Orient. Before the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 British ships maintained continuous schedules through the Mediterranean and Red Seas by an overland connection between the Nile Delta and the Gulf of Suez. Later a band of maritime shipping routes, second only to one which crossed the North Atlantic, funneled through the Middle East en route from ports of Western Europe to those of India, the Far East, and Australasia. By the 1930's air travel had blazed another trail along the same west-east

highroad. Cairo and Beirut are now firmly established as intercontinental trunkline air terminals where dozens of flights converge daily to and from points throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa. The grandiose rail projects heralded as Cairo-to-Cape Town and Berlin-to-Baghdad both penetrated the heart of the Middle East. Although they have dwindled to naught, their primary objectives are now accomplished, and very effectively, by air routes.

As a transit zone the Middle East could not fail to benefit from the travel passing by its doorstep. Way stations that developed as routes were pushed through the region gradually became important terminals in their own right. It is to these flourishing travel centers that the Middle East owes much of its present-day identity. Cities having commercial as well as purely transit significance comprise an impressive list, whether there by virtue of water, land, or air travel. Aden, Aleppo, Alexandria, Dhahran, Lydda, Sharjah, and Üsküdar are but a few of the names documenting the history of transportation through the Middle East. Khartoum, Benghazi, Mogadiscio, Kandahar, and Thessaloniki, too, have similar connotations but are marginal to the main battery of routes through the Mediterranean and skirting the southern periphery of Asia.

Petroleum Resources

The oil industry in all of its aspects, except ultimate consumption, plays a direct role in unification of the Middle East as a region. Many parts of the world produce, refine, transport, and carry on high negotiations in petroleum but not to the spectacular degree found in this area. Here proved oil reserves, which seem to increase in millions of barrels with each new advance in geological exploration, are believed to amount to more than 60 percent of the world total.⁷ Production, too, is jumping ahead so that since 1950 the Middle East countries have comprised the world's leading export area. The following brief tabulation compares their actual pro-

⁷ Excluding the North African fields in Libya and Algeria, at least 98 percent of the area's reserves are concentrated around the shores of the Persian Gulf.

duction in 1962 with that of other selected major areas of exploitation:

Area	Thousands of barrels per day
United States-----	7,332
Middle East *-----	6,249
U.S.S.R.-----	3,720
Venezuela-----	3,290
North Africa *-----	614

Such staggering statistics necessarily have a powerful impact upon the area to which they are attributable. Absence of other resources in quantity logically brings to the fore the effect upon the population of these newly found riches and raises problems common to all who may either directly or indirectly profit from them.

Pipelines and refineries as well as areas of concession greatly supplement exploitation in the oilfields themselves and spread the industry over a relatively wide segment of the Middle East. Whereas the head of the Persian Gulf comprises the center of production, pipelines across the desert to the eastern shores of the Mediterranean and refineries at strategic port cities as well as in the vicinity of producing areas give appreciable linear dimensions to activities involving petroleum, including service and associated industries. Secondary producing fields in southern Turkey and along the Gulf of Suez, plus exciting prospects for new reserves, push the oil business outward to form an even greater perimeter. On the other hand, the new oil discoveries being increasingly exploited in the Algerian and Libyan deserts do not properly qualify as units of the industry east of the Nile.

The Arab Area

It is less difficult to draw a line around the Arab lands than around any other region which can justly be called the Middle East. In light of a distinctive culture and long heritage the areas in which the Arab people dwell or over which they roam may easily be recognized. To the east they reach the Zagros mountain range dividing Iraq from Iran; to the north another

mountain range, the Taurus in southern Turkey, marks their maximum extent; to the west their numbers sweep through to the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of Morocco; and to the south the Indian Ocean and inhospitable stretches of jungle and desert in Africa provide physical boundaries beyond which they never became established. Within these broad confines may be cited four nodes, or concentrations, of Arab population: (1) the Arabian Peninsula, known historically as the "cradle of the Arab people," (2) the Fertile Crescent rimming the northern reaches of the Syrian Desert,¹⁰ (3) the countries of the middle and lower Nile, and (4) the "western lands" stretching along the north coast of Africa from Libya to Morocco. South of Turkey and west of Iran these Arab lands conform to a surprising degree with a broad concept of the Middle East.

The ideal of Arab unity, vigorously developed since the early 20th century, continues to exert itself by supranational political expressions such as pan-Arab congresses, the Arab League, and any of the many groupings of Arab states which continually come to the fore in the drive for world recognition. Although various factors, including a strong sense of religious sectarianism and regional particularism, have so far prevented any overall confederation of all Arab lands into a closely knit unit, evidence remains strong of common problems and concerted efforts to resolve them. But tensions in and among Arab groups, as well as their external relations, create world news which cannot be confined within any specific perimeter.

Religion

The heart of the Middle East is the birthplace for three world religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.¹¹ The latter, however,

¹⁰ The Fertile Crescent centers on the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys in Iraq and the Orontes River in Syria. It was the site of great civilizations of the ancient world, including the Babylonian and Assyrian.

¹¹ Islam is the commonly accepted word for the Moslem (Muslim, Muslem) faith, though the word Mohammedanism (Muslimism) is synonymous with it. Islam is normally used also to denote the entire religious system, embodying not only the faith itself but the associated civilization.

* Made up of the following political units, listed in order of importance: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait-Saudi Arabia Neutral Zone, Qatar, United Arab Republic, Bahrain, Turkey, and Israel.

* Made up of Algeria and Libya.

PERTINENT STATISTICS FOR COUNTRIES OF THE MIDDLE EAST

Country	Population (thousands)	Area (thousand sq. mi.)	Capital	Population of Capital (thousands)
CENTRAL AREA				
Aden and Protectorate of South Arabia	1, 000	111	Aden	99
Iran	22, 182	636	Tehran	1, 839
Iraq	7, 000	172	Baghdad	361
Israel	2, 428	8	Tel Aviv ¹	572
Jordan	² 1, 758	37	Amman	245
Kuwait	330	6	Kuwait	151
Lebanon	³ 1, 913	4	Beirut	400
Muscat and Oman	565	82	Muscat	5
Saudi Arabia	⁴ 4, 500	618	Riyadh	170
Syria	⁴ 4, 824	72	Damascus	530
Trucial States	125	32	(?)	
Turkey	30, 256	296	Ankara	646 (1, 317)
United Arab Republic	27, 968	386	Cairo	3, 348
Yemen	4, 500	75	San'a	60
Central area total	109, 349	2, 535		
PERIPHERAL AREA				
Afghanistan	13, 800	251	Kabul	400
Algeria	11, 410	920	Algiers	884
Ethiopia	21, 000	455	Addis Ababa	444
French Somaliland	81	9	Djibouti	32
India ⁷	458, 677	1, 175	New Delhi	395
Libya	1, 266	679	Tripoli ⁸	189
Morocco	12, 550	174	Rabat	228
Pakistan ⁹	98, 612	365	Rawalpindi ¹⁰	343
Somalia	2, 250	246	Mogadiscio	91
Sudan	12, 816	967	Khartoum ¹¹	132
Tunisia	4, 145	63	Tunis	680
Peripheral area total	636, 607	5, 304		
Combined total	745, 956	7, 839		

¹ In 1950 the Israel Parliament proclaimed Jerusalem (population 156,000) the capital. The U.S. Government does not recognize Jerusalem as the capital and the U.S. Embassy continues to be located in Tel Aviv.

² Includes 652,092 Palestinian refugees registered as of June 30, 1963.

³ Includes 149,983 Palestinian refugees registered as of June 30, 1963.

⁴ Estimates of 6-7 million population have been standard for some years until the "census" of 1963. Only 20 percent of the population are Bedouin nomads.

⁵ Includes 126,939 Palestinian refugees registered as of June 30, 1963.

⁶ There are 7 Trucial States, each with its own capital. Population estimates are available only for

states: Dubai, 55-60,000; Sharjah, 15-20,000; Ajman, 4-5,000; Umm al Qaywayn, 4-5,000; Ras al Khaymah, 12-15,000; Fujayray, 5-7,000; Abu Dhabi, 15-20,000.

⁷ Population figures include 1963 estimates for: Nagaland, 376,350; North East Frontier Agency, 343,980; Pondicherry, 377,140; and Junagadh and Manavadar, 1,275,718. Excluded are Goa, Daman, and Diu, 646,199 (1963 estimate), which were not covered in the 1961 Indian census. Also excluded is Jammu-Kashmir; according to the 1963 estimate it has a population of 4,676,957, of which 3,643,349 are claimed by India and 1,033,608 are in that portion held by Pakistan.

Area figures exclude Jammu-Kashmir (85,861 square miles) and Goa, Daman, and Diu (1,426 square miles) but include all other political divisions covered by the

prevails overwhelmingly among the peoples of the area. In addition the Moslem faith serves as spiritual guidance for other, more remote, millions. Not only Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, in the gray area of Middle East definitions, but East Africa, West Africa, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysian Borneo, Brunei, Yugoslavia, Albania, and parts of the Soviet Union and China have Moslems in widespread segments or as significant minorities. Followers of the Christian and Jewish religions still regard the lands of the eastern Mediterranean as the spiritual source of their faith and continue to support religious islands within the Moslem bloc. The religion providing the foundation of strength for the unity of the Arab people also appeals to and strongly influences peoples of the non-Arab world. Within this category fall the populations of Iran and Turkey, which have been drawn into a Middle Eastern pattern even though they have no Arab heritage or language.

Much of the unifying strength attributable to the Moslem faith results from the social, cultural, political, and legal systems which have developed within Islam. Such all-encompassing societies are typical of Islam and hence of the Middle East. The rules are the same for most facets of human behavior; so much that is true for one Arab land will tend to be found in another. In this respect it should be understood

that the Middle East may show more uniform characteristics than other world regions, such as Western Europe, where fewer aspects serve to weld the area into a unit.

Language

The Arabic language is symbolic of the Middle East. Together with religion it is the expression of great cultural advances attributable to the generations who have peopled this region. At first localized within the Arabian Peninsula, it spread over wide areas with the rise of Islam, especially during the dramatic expansion of the seventh and eighth centuries. The richness of Arabic literature testifies to the development of the language as a vehicle for philosophical and scientific thought in the Middle Ages. Today the literary language serves as the lingua franca of the entire Arab world. It is a force that tends to counteract the divisive effects of the multiplicity of separate dialects that characterize the spoken language of the area.

At present an estimated 60 million people live in regions where Arabic prevails, forming a language axis which crosses northern Africa and extends to Iran, encompassing Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Malta, Libya, northern Sudan, the United Arab Republic, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, parts of Israel and Iran, and all political entities in the Arabian Peninsula. In addition Arabic is important throughout much of the east coast of Africa as far south as Zanzibar and is an important component of the Swahili lingua franca that is used there. Another quarter of a billion people look upon Arabic as a sacred language as they turn to Mecca for spiritual inspiration.

The languages of Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, and West Pakistan reflect a strong Arabic influence, as in the use of Arabic script for Persian, Pushtu, and Urdu and the presence of a high percentage of Arabic loan words in Persian, Turkish, and Urdu.

Despite the political inroads made into Arab-speaking lands by outsiders speaking strange tongues, the basic language has remained steadfast. English, French, and Italian have in places been introduced but without displacing the local language. But the Arabs themselves

1961 Indian census. New Delhi, the capital, should not be confused with immediately adjacent (old) Delhi, population 2,468,000 (1962 estimate).

⁸ Benghazi and Tripoli are copitals. In addition, a federal administrative center has been established at Baida (Al Baydá). No population figures are available for either Benghazi or Baida.

⁹ Figures exclude Junagadh-Manavadar area, 4,186 square miles, population 1,275,718 (1963 estimate), and Jammu-Kashmir, 85,861 square miles, population 4,676,957 (1963 estimate).

¹⁰ Rawalpindi is the seat of the executive branch of the government pending the construction of the capital city of Islamabad. The new constitution (1962) designated Dacca as the second capital of the country and seat of the legislative branch. The U.S. Embassy continues to be at Karachi.

¹¹ Khartoum and Omdurman, population 132,000 and 162,000 respectively (1962 estimate), are separated by the White Nile but are often considered to be one city.

were unable to eliminate completely the languages of the people they conquered. In areas formerly under Arab rule—in Russian Central Asia, Iran, southern Turkey, and Malta—Arabic itself survives in linguistic islands. Berber in northern Africa; Nubian in the United Arab Republic and Sudan; Hebrew in Israel; Kurdish in Iraq; Aramaic in Iraq and Syria; and Turkish in minority settlements remaining from Ottoman and pre-Ottoman days are representative of the more important linguistic islands limited to specific groups.

Résumé

Without question the region known as the Middle East is one of world importance regardless of the geographic nomenclature applied to it. Some name must be given to the land of the Suez Canal and its commercial lifelines; of the strategic Dardanelles and Bosphorus waterways; of the rich oilfields rimming the shores of the Persian Gulf and the pipelines traversing the Syrian Desert; of the great religious centers of Jerusalem, Najaf, Mecca, and Medina; of the heritage of ancient civilizations which flour-

ished in the Tigris-Euphrates and Nile valleys; and of the spirit of independence and self-expression surging throughout the area. Whether it is called Middle East, Near East, or some other name is not of the greatest moment. But "Middle East" as a regional term has outdistanced others through the war and postwar years, which signifies that we will probably have to live with it for some time to come.

Apparently no one authority or school of thought has the power to alter materially the trend in naming so potent a part of the globe. That we cannot at the moment give a clear-cut definition to the Middle East is both evident and unfortunate. All definitions admit of the existence of such a region, most of them including a basic nucleus such as shown in the unshaded area of the map on pages 2-3. Beyond that, however, one cannot apply rules or look to precedents. The most optimistic view which can be taken is that in future years the concept of a Middle East will become stabilized to the extent that a line can be drawn around it without raising side issues in terminology that cloud the real issue at hand.

